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ABSTRACT

The publication suggests some guiding principles through which the Youth Development Program (YDP) director and his staff can fulfill their roles without dominating the program and threatening youth participation. An overall approach for working with youth, the human development approach, emphasizing the development and support of responsibility on the part of other persons is briefly discussed. The major portion of the document describes the roles and responsibilities of the YDP director and staff in working with youth and with the Community Action Agency (CAA) through which the YDP is funded. Joint program planning and implementation (with youth), technical assistance, resource development, and administrative roles are outlined. (Author/MS)

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YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

STAFF

A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PAMPHLET

Prepared by

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the broadest sense, Community Action Agency (CAA) youth staff, including Youth Development Program (YDP) Directors, should be a resource to youth. Any program, whether for poor youth or others, is made up of certain necessary parts without which it cannot function. While poor youth may have the capacity to generate many of the parts of the Youth Development Program, they often lack all of the resources necessary to mount a comprehensive program. They may, for instance, put together a teen center, or start a narcotics education program, provided the missing parts are made available to them. Often the missing element for beginning a program is nothing more than a place where young people can gather to develop their ideas. Sometimes, a missing element is far more complicated because a program is ambitious, calling for technical expertise in a specific program area to develop a complex proposal involving resources outside the CAA. Whatever the situation, CAA youth staff should facilitate development of youth programs by asking relevant questions to insure that youth decision-making has not overlooked important factors, by supplying information, and by assisting youth to find the missing pieces of their programs.

This process is necessarily complex because youth involvement and participation are as important to the success of a YDP as the program itself. If the CAA youth staff supplies the missing ingredients to enable a program to begin and, in doing so, neglects youth input, the program will lose credibility with youth and ultimately lose them. Just as the basic element of a program - the

idea of what to do – must come from youth, the rest of the elements must be introduced through them, even if initially suggested by the director or his staff.

The problem of how youth staff relates to Youth Councils and groups must be faced. Most youth workers respect the idea that youth, themselves, should participate in the design, operation, and monitoring of youth program. They realize that youth will respond more positively to a program strongly identified as their own than one put together and administered by adults. Further, youth workers have learned that youth often better recognize what makes sense for a youth program because they, naturally, know more about how they spend their time and what will hold their interest.

The respect that youth workers have for youth's role in decision-making has one major drawback, however. It can make them so sensitive about not interfering that their ability to act as a definite resource to youth may be impaired. Youth workers do have an affirmative role to play and at times will have to act, while in some way, influencing youth decision-making.

The following sections suggest some guiding principles through which the Youth Development Program director and his staff can fulfill their demanding roles without dominating the program and threatening youth participation.

II. METHODS FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH

An overall approach or method for working with youth is one which may be called the human development approach. If it is established as an ultimate goal

for CAA Youth Staff, the possibility of using negative approaches to working with youth should be minimal. The human development approach emphasizes the development and support of responsibility on the part of other persons. Exactly how it is reached and used cannot be precisely defined. It might involve avoiding assuming or accepting a leadership role, avoiding making decisions for a youth group, or giving advice - not to shirk responsibility but to allow other members of the group to assume more responsible roles, exercise their problem-solving and decision-making abilities, and to learn to be independent. More actively, it might involve asking questions to force others to seek solutions to their own problems, to explore alternatives and to anticipate consequences. Or it might involve confronting and challenging an individual or group to force them to recognize and assume their responsibilities.

The CAA Youth Staff's ability to undertake this approach will be decisive in determining the success of its relationship with youth. It represents the appropriate approach a CAA staff should take to give credence to the Youth Development Program and to develop and to insure meaningful youth involvement.

III. THE ROLES OF THE YDP DIRECTOR AND STAFF

Youth workers, whether directors or staff, must participate in a number of complementary and sometimes overlapping roles in performing their duties in the Youth Development Program. They jointly share responsibility for planning and implementing YDP program activities with youth, but must also guide them. They

also serve the YDP as resource developers, technical assistants and as administrators performing the managerial duties required of CAA program staff. These roles may not be performed by any one individual on the CAA staff, but by many staff each playing a part of the overall role of mobilizing and maintaining the program. On the other hand, in decentralized YDPs, where youth programs are incorporated into Neighborhood Centers, CAA central staff may very well be responsible only for certain specified tasks such as administration and resource development, with the other tasks - planning, technical assistance, and program delivery - being performed at the neighborhood level.

A. The Joint Role of Planning and Implementation

In answering the question, "How are YDP directors and staff to support and assist the youth in planning and implementing their program?" particular attention must be directed to the mechanics by which the essential elements of a program are put together. As administrators, technical assistants, and resource developers to the youth program, staff should identify what it is they will do, do that, and no more. In order to define what they should do, they must have a clear understanding of what the Youth Development Program is all about. This understanding includes a basic philosophy about youth but, more practically, must be based on a realistic grasp of what should happen in a Youth Development Program.

A supportive structure must be established in which staff and youth cooperatively write plans and proposals, establish program goals and priorities, and

search out the resources and support necessary to their program plans and proposals. As staff and youth share the experiences of planning and organizing the program, youth develop the leadership skills necessary for directing and operating program activities. Youth ideas and decisions are supported by the staff's technical guidance in how such ideas become operative as a youth program. Through this process of involvement in planning the program and setting it up, youth help to insure that the program will make sense to other youths, and provide a formal mechanism, the Youth Council, for youth to be further involved in the planning of programs designed to serve them.

Of course, involving youth in the planning and implementation of the program presents problems. Youth will take longer to produce an orderly program which works to their benefit and pleases administrators; they will have to learn the skills of planning and administration in order to keep the program going. But when they have done these things, they will have acquired skills that other experiences have never let them learn. The ''process'' of doing things will have actually been a program for their own education and growth. This is what is meant by the idea that, in Youth Development Programs, the process is one of the important measures of the success of the program.

The idea that the process of youth involvement in planning, implementing, and monitoring programs is itself an important product of Youth Development Programs is an essential characteristic of these programs. It is this characteristic that really distinguishes YDPs from other youth programs. It affects the sub-

stance of every program area that youth get into. The programs are always a little more freewheeling than those run by professionals. They must be if the process is to open enough to allow really meaningful experiences for youth. As a result, the program areas may not, in their early stages of development, turn out the same product that a similar program run by adults might.

Youth Development Program directors and staffs must appreciate this quality and understand how they can support it. Only by supporting it can they make the ''process'' through which the programs develop useful to the youth involved.

B. The Role of the Technical Assistant

Since Youth Development Programs can use any of a wide range of program areas as a vehicle for their work (for example, education, employment, community services, narcotics education, police-youth relations, etc.), the staff of a Community Action Agency must be able to respond to a large variety of requests from youth for technical assistance and support. As technical assistants to the program, the staff's work becomes quite difficult because of the delicate relationship of the YDP director and his staff to the youth. The respect the youth workers have for youth's role in decision-making can interfere with the technical tasks which staff must perform to assist youth in their programming. Youth workers should neither be domineering on the one extreme nor hesitant to make constructive input on the other.

They must strike a balance. Further, the nature of effective technical assistance is such that it transmits skills by concentrated work with youth. This will not occur if youth workers adopt either of the extremes.

The job of helping youth develop plans and proposals is a technical one. It does not depend on extraordinary abilities to relate to youth as much as it does on the technical skills of being able to put together a well thought out proposal. A well thought out proposal could be a simple letter detailing the purpose of the project proposed, the specific means by which it would be done, and a budget. What is most important is that it represent the decisions of youth, and that the youth have considered all the important factors in formulating it.

The role of the Youth Development Program director and staff in this part of the process is one of technical assistance. They should be able to show the Youth Council what must be done to seek funds from the CAA and from sources outside the CAA. As a part of this responsibility, the director or staff should ask questions about any important areas of consideration that the Youth Council may have overlooked. The process of developing the proposal and beginning to learn about planning will not be a useful one if it does not touch on all the important aspects of implementing the Youth Council program.

In order to do this the director and staff must be capable of doing the necessary planning to put a program together. Indeed, the tendency of youth to act first and plan only when they have had enough experience to see the necessity

of planning indicates that the director and staff must be able to do a lot of planning. Such planning represents a level of back-up, or support, for the Youth Council and should complement rather than eliminate the council's planning. It should take place in the background so that the right questions can be raised at the right time.

The following is an example of the technical assistance function of CAA youth staff. In establishing a teen center, there are a number of practical considerations that anyone without extensive planning might overlook: insurance, maintenance problems, need for meeting fire and health codes, future expenses necessitated by changing usage of the center, etc. The director and staff must foresee these issues and raise them if they are not raised by the youth themselves. The key to effectively playing this role is that they only raise the issue, not decide it. In this same context, with a different example, staff must also think ahead and realize that problems may arise with parents and neighbors if there is no provision for an adult to be present when the center is open. Not only must this be provided for, either in the budget or through a reliable system of volunteered time, but the adults involved must be trained. The director and staff are giving youth technical assistance when they alert them to some of the future needs of their program. They must be careful not to steal the initiative when they give such assistance. At the same time, when they see something of extreme importance, they should not feel compelled to avoid it for fear of interfering in youth activities. The balance between providing too much help and not enough focuses on the CAA staff's understanding of its role to the youth program.

If advising youth of a particular matter of great importance has the potential of damaging the relationship of the youth staff to youth, an alternative means for approaching youth may be advisable. A matter of importance will be something the CAA must be aware of and should require proper action on its part. To protect the youth staff/youth relationship, a youth worker may prompt the CAA to raise the matter through the CAA director or some other CAA staff member.

The idea that the youth worker could prompt the CAA to make a suggestion that the youth could not, shows that the role of the youth worker represents a balance between youth demands and potential CAA support, or lack thereof, and must be undertaken with sensitivity and resourcefulness.

C. The Role of the Resource Developer

The director and staff should be experts at locating sources of funds and materials outside the CAA, not only because of the severe limitations on CAA funds, but also because the ''seeding'' effect of CAA funds should be emphasized to engender self-sufficiency in youth.

One inevitable part of making resources available to youth is helping them to prepare plans and proposals for the allocation and expenditure of CAA funds in the youth area. The director and staff should take care not to limit their hopes to funds allocated by the CAA. Youth are, after all, a substantial part of the communities that various agencies are designed to serve, and they should put a

proportionate claim on services and funding sources they may represent. Youth staff, in their role as resource gatherers, should aid in this process. The key to attracting these other funding sources is, of course, having effective programs in place so that the use of the funds is obvious and appealing.

The director should be the prime resource gatherer of the Youth Development Program staff. He should be able to help staff members pursue needed assets from outside the CAA. The director will have more contacts with the heads of other agencies and may be able to set up the basis for cooperation so that the staff can make use of other mobilized resources such as city buildings or special equipment.

The role of resource gatherer often overlaps with that of coordinator. When a Youth Council decides it wants to have a lawyer explain the advantages and disadvantages of incorporation or talk to them about their rights, it may have to go to the CAA YDP staff to get one. The director should not only get one (Legal Services programs are an obvious source) but should see if other councils are interested and perhaps set up an on-going relationship between some lawyers and each Youth Council. The director could even go a step further and see if there is a group in a local law school that would like to provide students to attend meetings on request, and function as adult advisors to the Council.

D. The Administrative Role of the YDP Director

This is the most general and overlapping role of all. Administration cuts across and affects all the tasks performed in planning and implementing programs

with youth, in providing technical assistance, and in developing resources. Effective administration comprises the skills of the planner, coordinator, and supervisor.

The organization and structure of the Youth Development Program are an important responsibilities of the director. The development of an organizational base should be closely related to the objectives of the Youth Development Program, its philosophy, and the principal thrust of its program activities. It can be expected that, where the Youth Development Program Director fails to establish a formal structure consistent with the program's objectives, a successful program operation will be difficult to achieve. The structure should be designed to suit the size of the Youth Development Program, the scope of its services and activities, and the plans for its future development. As the program grows and changes, the organizational structure must be modified and kept up-to-date through periodic examination.

After program goals and objectives have been clearly defined, a Youth Development Program Director can determine what arrangement of staff and resources would best enable the program to meet its goals. Usually, this requires consideration of (1) money; (2) space; (3) supplies and materials; (4) personnel; and (5) legal and/or governmental regulations. It involves coordinating each with all others.

In establishing an organizational structure, the director categorizes and divides staff activities. He then assigns responsibility for working with these

different categories to staff who are organized to maximize efficiency and cooperation. A well-designed organizational structure with qualified personnel in key positions will maximize the possibility for achieving effective execution, coordination, and control of the policies and functions of the program. To a large degree, the size of the program will determine the type of organizational structure it assumes.

The following is a general procedure useful to Youth Development Program Directors in designing an organizational structure: 1) state the objectives and scope of activities of the youth program; 2) separate the activities, i.e., employment, education, etc., and set up distinct program areas; 3) delegate authority and responsibility; 4) assign specific tasks to program areas; 5) establish the required staff position; 6) develop a plan of action or procedure for operating; 7) employ qualified staff; and 8) proceed to make the program operational.

The director should make program management an active and productive process composed of several tasks which must be carried out in the program is to function. The director must either carry out the following tasks, or insure that they are carried out:

1) Planning - working out in broad outline the things that need to be done and the methods for doing them.
2) Organizing - establishing a formal structure through which work activities are arranged.
3) Staffing - undertaking the whole personnel function of bringing in and training staff.

4) Directing - the continuous task of making decisions and presenting them in specific and general orders and instructions and providing leadership.

5) Coordinating - Interrelating the various parts of the work.

6) Reporting - keeping appropriate persons informed through records, research, and inspection.

7) Budgeting - fiscal planning, accounting and control.

8) Monitoring - continuous review of program performance and impact-a system through which a Youth Development Program Director and youth learn through their mistakes and maximize their successes.

A program is best organized and administered when leadership is as widely shared as the abilities and interest of the staff allow. If a director feels that his position permits or requires him to monopolize the leadership function, the program will be less organized and administered and will have less impact on poor youth. The organization should be structured to enable a group of people, poor youth in particular, to function as an effective unit in achieving their common goals.

The Youth Program Director is different from other youth program workers principally because he is administratively responsible to the CAA for his staff,

and, perhaps, for other related administrative functions. The director will also spend more time at meetings both within and without the CAA, representing the interests of the program along with youth representatives where they may be utilized. The rest of the staff will remain closer to day-to-day program operation.

The Youth Program Director must also be able to see the training needs of the staff. This requires objectivity about the ability and progress of staff. It also requires some monitoring, since the staff may be unable to fully report its own training needs. The director can accomplish this while performing other related duties of his job, such as lining up resources for a particular project. Thus, the director assumes the multiple responsibilities of assisting his staff with their jobs while also analyzing the progress of the YDP and training participating youth (especially youth leaders).

Most importantly, the director must be able to plan, to foresee some of the potential problems which exist before they become problems, and to deal with them appropriately. The staff will invariably need assistance with planning, largely because they are so close to their work and youth that they won't always be capable of an objective definition of need. The Youth Development Program Director should try to relate each of the staff's perceived needs to the overall program so that a broad perspective for action can be maintained. For instance, a staff worker may feel that the program's problem is a Neighborhood Center Staff's unwillingness to produce equipment when needed by youth. The real problem may be completely different. Perhaps the Youth Council will already have changed its idea of what to do, so that

the equipment is no longer needed; or the unwillingness of the center staff is actually an inability to provide equipment, and a different source of equipment must be sought. The director must be able to create a larger perspective for problem-solving, including the necessity of suggesting that his youth worker may be approaching the problem in an ineffective way.

The director must also supervise CAA youth staff. The director at times may not hire staff, since the CAA board personnel committees, along with the Youth Councils, may be involved in this activity. Usually, the hiring function is delegated to the YDP director. In either case, the director may be able to help write the job description for the staff worker, or help establish the criteria that are used in staff selection. This gives the director an opportunity to create understanding of what qualities and capabilities are essential in a Youth Development Program staff, and in doing so, to be a resource in the selection of staff. Much more than the ability to relate to youth is involved, as has been detailed in previous discussions.

Direct staff supervision essentially relates to solving everyday problems or providing training. Since the director cannot supervise all staff members' work in detail, the best opportunities to provide some guidance and supervision may come when a problem arises. A more routine means of providing guidance occurs in reviewing workers' plans to be sure that they relate to the needs of the program. The director must plan ahead of the staff, just as the staff should plan ahead of the Youth Council, and can, therefore, support the staff by aiding them in their planning.

Representing the interests of the Youth Development Program ranges from meeting with the chairman of the Mayor's Council on Youth Opportunity or the Parks and Recreation Department, to writing reports on the program for the CAA and OEO. Each of these things can be as productive as the director is imaginative. City and county agencies may be able to provide resources that the program can use, or, on the other hand, may be anxious to hear some of the ideas that Youth Councils are developing. Reports to the CAA, OEO and other community agencies, can be a means of gathering more support for the program by showing what it has been able to accomplish, or by getting input from other CAA personnel in solving broad problems.

Cooperation and support from many individuals, groups, and institutions is needed to make the program successful. The director should be sensitive to the interests of other agencies and groups in the community so that their cooperation and support can be generated and maintained. He must fully comprehend the interplay between young people, local institutions and the community at large as it relates to operation of the YDP. The Youth Development Program director must accept as a prime responsibility the task of integrating youth into the total affairs and activities of the community, particularly as they relate to current issues and concerns. Any sense of long range insulation from such responsibility must be rejected if the Youth Development Program is to attain its objectives of youth involvement and community improvement.